

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 AID-05 OMB-01 /083 W

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R 071055Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9594

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC HONOLULU

USSAG NAKHON PHANOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 0277

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJ: CAMPAIGN '75 -- V

REF: BANGKOK 20215

INTRODUCTION:

THE THAI PARLIMENTARY ELECTIONS ARE SCHEDULED FOR
26 JANUARY 1975. THIS IS THE FIFTH OF SEVEN WEEKLY
ELECTION CAMPAIGN SITUATION REPORTS.

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SUMMARY:

THE PRESS IS STARTING TO GET IMPATIENT WITH THE CAMPAIGN. ALTHOUGH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PAPER "THE NATION" RECENTLY EDITORIALIZED ABOUT THE LACK OF ISSUES, THE BRIEF AND UNHAPPY VISIT TO BANGKOK OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTAKACHON HAS BECOME ONE. IT PRESENTS PROBLEMS FOR FORMER UNITED THAI PEOPLE'S PARTY PARLIAMENTARIANS UPOUNTRY. THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY HAS INTRODUCED A NEW TWIST, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE PERSONALIZATION OF THAI ELECTIONS. THE CAMPAIGN IS BEGINNING TO PICK UP STEAM. HEAVY RAINS HAVE FLOODED OUT THE CAMPAIGN IN THE SOUTH. END SUMMARY.

1. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR (MOI) STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES THE 42 POLITICAL PARTIES ARE RUNNING UNDERLINES THE CONCLUSION THAT THERE ARE ONLY A FEW MAJOR PARTIES IN THE ELECTION. AFTER THE TOP FOUR PARTIES, WHICH HAVE OVER 200 CANDIDATES EACH FOR THE 269 SEAT PARLIAMENT (REFTEL), COME SOCIAL NATIONALIST (142), SOCIAL AGRARIAN (121), AND NEW FORCE (102). THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS RUNNING 82 CANDIDATES AND THE SOCIALIST UNITED FRONT 74. CHUMPHON MANINET'S DEMOCRACY PARTY HAS 82 CANDIDATES ACCORDING TO MOI FIGURES, AND THE THAI NATIONAL REGENERATION HAS 97. NEITHER OF THESE TWO PARTIES WILL DO WELL. PEOPLE'S PEACE PARTY, WHICH PRASOET RUCHIRAWONG COVERTLY BACKS, HAS 78 CANDIDATES, SOME OF WHICH HAVE A RESPECTABLE CHANCE OF WINNING THEIR RACES. THA-NGAI SUWANNATHAT'S PEOPLE'S PARTY HAS 74 CANDIDATES. THROWN OUT OF SENI PRAMOT'S DEMOCRAT PARTY SOME YEARS AGO, THA-NGAI'S GROUP WILL NOT DO WELL EITHER. THE FOURTEENTH THROUGH SIXTEENTH RANKED PARTIES HAVE 36, 32 AND 31 CANDIDATES RESPECTIVELY. SIX PARTIES HAVE 20 TO 30 CANDIDATES; NINE PARTIES HAVE 10 - 20 CANDIDATES, ELEVEN PARTIES HAVE 1 TO 9 CANDIDATES. THIS LAST GROUP INCLUDES THREE PARTIES WITH A SINGLE CANDIDATE, THREE PARTIES WITH 2 CANDIDATES, AND TWO PARTIES WITH 3 CANDIDATES.

2. COMPLAINING ABOUT THE DEARTH OF ISSUES IN THE ELECTION AND THE CONSEQUENT EMPHASIS ON PERSONALITIES, "THE NATION" EDITORIALIZED JANUARY 7, ON WHAT IT THOUGHT SHOULD BE IM-CONFIDENTIAL

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PORTANT ISSUES. FIRST ON ITS LIST WAS THE RISING COST OF LIVING; THEN CAME LAW AND ORDER AND THE INSURGENCY; AND LASTLY, THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE. OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY SUPPORT THE CONCLUSION THAT ISSUES AND PLATFORMS PLAY A SMALL PART IN THAI CAMPAIGNS. A NUMBER OF GOVERNORS, PARTICULARLY IN CENTRAL THAILAND, POINT OUT THAT THE FARMERS ARE WELL OFF FINANCIALLY. SUNAI NA UBON, DISTRICT OFFICER OF

REMOTE PHAISILI IN NAKHON SAWAN PROVINCE, SAID THAT HIS AREA WAS SO WELL OFF THAT VOTE BUYING WOULD NOT WORK.

3. THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY HAS ADDED A NEW TWIST TO THE PERSONALIZATION OF THE CAMPAIGN BY PLACING BILLBOARDS AROUND BANGKOK ASKING THE PEOPLE WHOM THEY WANT TO BE PRIME MINISTER. KHUKRIT PRAMOT'S NAME HEADS THE LIST IN BOLD RED LETTERS, BUT THE POSTER ALSO CARRIES THE NAMES OF PRAMAN ADIREKSAN (THAI NATION), THAWIT KLINPRATHUM (SOCIAL JUSTICE), AND CHUMPHON MANINET (DEMOCRACY). THE NOT TOO SUBTLE CONCLUSION IS THAT KHUKRIT IS THE ONE.

4. AS ELECTION DAY APPROACHES, THE CAMPAIGN IS BEGINNING TO HEAT UP. MORE POSTERS AND BILLBOARDS APPEAR EVERYDAY. BUNLOET NA CHIANG MAI'S LITTLE ADVERTISING GIMMICK MAY HAVE BACKFIRED IN HIS NAMESAKE PROVINCE. HE APPARENTLY DISTRIBUTED LEAFLETS WHICH SHOW HIM IN THE COMPANY OF THE KING AND QUEEN. THE COMPETITION HAS CHASTISED THIS PRESUMPTIVENESS SEVERELY.

5. ALL THE CONSULATES REPORT AN INCREASE IN ACTIVITY AS THE CAMPAIGN ENTERS ITS SIXTH WEEK. CHIANG MAI REPORTS THAT DEMOCRAT PARTY LEADER SENI PRAMOT HAS CAMPAIGNED UPCOUNTRY AND THAT THE HEAD OF THE SOCIAL NATIONALISTS, PRASIT KANCHANAWAT, IS CAMPAIGNING IN NORTHERN PROVINCES THIS COMING WEEK.

6. ON THE SUBJECT OF MONEY AND CAMPAIGNING, THAI NATION LEADER PRAMAN ADIREKSAN DOWNPLAYED COMPLAINTS ABOUT VOTE BUYING FROM HIS POLITICAL OPPONENTS. HE LOFTILY ANSWERED THAT ORGANIZERS OF THE THAI NATION, PERHAPS THE RICHEST PARTY, "MERELY KNOW HOW TO MAKE USE OF THE LITTLE MONEY WE HAVE".

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7. THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION HAS SEIZED UPON FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTIKACHON'S SURPRISE VISIT TO BANGKOK DECEMBER 27-29 TO BERATE FORMER UNITED THAI PEOPLE'S PARTY (UTPP) PARLIAMENTARIANS. THAI NATION CANDIDATE PRASIT CHUNPHINIT TOLD CONSULATE CHIANG MAI THAT HE IS UNDER SEVERE ATTACK IN KAMPHENGPHET PROVINCE. THE NEWSPAPERS REPORTED THAT VARIOUS OPPOSITION ELEMENTS HAVE DRUMMED ON THIS ISSUE UPCOUNTRY. DEMOCRAT PARTY LEADER SENI PRAMOT RECENTLY GAVE A NEWS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE SAID THAT THANOM'S RETURN BOOSTED THE POPULARITY OF THE DEMOCRATS.

8. UNSEASONALLY HEAVY RAINS HAVE COMMENCED IN SOUTHERN THAILAND. THE SONGKHLA CONSUL HAD EARLIER MENTIONED THAT

THE DELAY IN THE START OF THE RAINY SEASON HAD ALLOWED THE
CANDIDATES TO CAMPAING IN SOME OF THE MORE ISOLATED AREAS.
THE RAINS AND SUBSEQUENT FLOODING WILL NOW CUT OFF VILLAGERS
AND CANDIDATES. THE CANDIDATES' WHOSE STRATIGIES CALL FOR
WINNING HEAVILY IN RURAL AREAS MAY SUCCUMB TO CANDIDATES WHO
ENJOY SUPPORT FROM URBAN AREAS.
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